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ABSTRACT

This description is divided into four sections: (1) Danish library legislation for the blind and physically handicapped, (2) the history of library service to the blind, (3) the existing state of library service to the blind and physically handicapped, and (4) the future of such services. Ways to improve the "have-little" status of the blind and physically handicapped in Danish libraries are considered, with emphasis on the blind, though recommendations are included for services to other handicapped users. The production of talking books, as well as braille materials, is a major focus. (JD)

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LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE BLIND AND
PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED IN DENMARK

by

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During the economic crisis in the 1930's in the U.S.A. some Americans looked upon their native country as a nation divided into two: The have's and the have-not's.

There are probably very few nations to-day which still have not representatives of these two classes among their inhabitants.

In a broader sense the family of nations up to this day could also be described as have's and have not's. If we should vary the picture from the pure black and white - or poor and prosperous - we might introduce the have-little's, the have-something's and the have-equal's.

This simplified terminology could also be applied to describe the library situation of the separate library consumer groups within each country.

In Denmark the blind and physically handicapped belong to the have-little-group. Just now we are endeavouring to rise above this level and approach the have-something-stage. But there is a long way to go.

None of us know about have-equal-nations, have-equal being fundamentally defined as access to the total annual ink-print-production of books and magazines in a given country, less the production of reprints and such publications where the seriousness of the handicap prevents the person from acquiring the publication in question.

If we look at our everyday pragmatic reality in terms of this fundamental definition we have to admit two drawbacks. One is the fact that publications which are not purchased by libraries, especially the public libraries, remain available to the non-handicapped, only on payment. The second is that we have not done enough in the technical field with regard to publications which from a traditional point of view are considered to be unapplicable to seriously handicapped people.

Even if many new things are in progress, a blind member of our staff may be right when he states: As long as it has no military importance there will neither be sufficient technical research nor sufficient grants to utilize the technical inventions that already exist.

None of us have ever heard about have-equal nations in this sense. It will remain a vision for a very long time to come. But we need this vision to further our daily efforts, not to be crushed down by budget- or staffworries.

It is also here that IFLA comes in as an inspiring force for our national pragmatic work, trying to cover the whole area from the poorest developing country to the most sophisticated, maybe even pampered industrial society of the western world.

Legislation.

In Denmark we have library legislation as well as copyright-legislation which prescribe the rules within which we have to operate. The public library act states very explicitly that the public libraries are meant for everybody without reservation, children and adults, handicapped and non-handicapped. Besides every municipality or parish for that matter must make library facilities available to the public or at least have a library service agreement with a neighbouring municipality. Furthermore the interavailability-system is adapted. On principle it should be possible for the smallest library unit to borrow any book found in the whole system, including the scientific and national libraries. So far so good. What about the copyright legislation then? In the present copyright act, which is expected to be replaced in the session 1981-82 we find above all section 18 which reads as follows: "Published literary and musical works may be copied in Braille, and copies may also be photocopied for use in schools for the deaf and persons suffering from speech defects.

With special reference to lending to blind, partially sighted and others who because of disablement are incapable of reading ordinary books it is permitted to produce copies of published literary works through sound recording when this is not done for sale. For such recordings copyright-holders are entitled to remuneration. The size of the remuneration is fixed through direct negotiations between the producer and the Danish society of authors. And this is considered to be binding also for non-members.

In Denmark the author is normally the primary copyright-holder, not the publisher. According to the minister of cultural affairs this section 18, subsection 2 may be interpreted to the effect that talking books may not only be lent to any person whose disablement prevents him to read ordinary print, but also to persons whose reading ability is so small that it is not possible for them to cover a normal reading requirement because the reading involves disproportionate efforts or takes inordinately long time.

This very broad interpretation is at the moment tolerated, but not officially accepted by the Danish society of authors. The time to come to a conclusion in the matter will probably not arise before new library and copyright acts are passed.

In addition to section 18, section 11 introduces permission to reproduce single copies of published works for private use without remuneration provided that such copies must not be used for other purposes. And it is fully legal that public bodies such as libraries undertake the practical work involved to meet existing private demand.

This section provides legal basis for production of textbooks and other special literature for blind and disabled students in audible form. (As far as Braille concerns we may print what we want free of charge according to section 18,1).

Section 17 provides educational establishments with permission to produce copies of works transmitted through radio and television. Whereas royalties can be claimed only when such copies are not intended for educational purposes. This is a very useful provision for schools for the blind.

As far as books in large print are concerned they are subject to the same copyright rules as ordinary inkprint books and in Denmark issued through the public libraries exclusively and produced by ordinary publishing houses.

Taking the favourable legislation into account along with the fact that Denmark spends about 180 mill. dollars a year on the public libraries one might wonder why we do not maintain a higher standard in our library provision for the blind and physically handicapped.

It is too simple to say that handicapped people traditionally are seated at the bottom of the long table no matter how true it might be.

History.

As almost always the explanation is a historical one. The very first library service for the blind in Denmark took place within the walls of an institution for the blind. The Royal Danish Institute for the blind was founded in 1858 when the government took over the educational work and vocational training which had been organized for blind children by a private charity organization "The three Magi" since 1811. As can be imagined there was a close race between the Holy Bible and Hans Chr. Andersen to become the first Danish (relief) book, printed exclusively for the blind. In 1856 the oldest copy-right-holder became the winner with the first part of the Sermon on the Mount.

The first independent library for the blind was founded in 1883 by progressive blind individuals who had a strong desire to make literature more accessible to the blind. Their association also dealt with support to the needy blind. It existed, also with much help of volunteer transcribers, for 75 years till 1958, where the library part of its work was merged with the State Library and Printing House for the Blind and the rest of its work taken over by the Society of the Blind.

The State Library and Printing House had formed an integral part of the Royal (now State) Institute for the Blind. From 1924 it had staff and budget of its own but still belonged under the leadership of the institute. In 1952 it became a separate government body, two years later it moved to its own premises and finally in 1964 to the present location. The field of activity of this present institution is to produce and provide Braillebooks, -magazines and -music as well as talking books and magazines and to run a sales department of aids and facilities for the blind. Of course this last function is not necessarily a library task but it has been convenient to run it with the rest of the establishment because a large part of its work has to do with blind people's reading, writing and listening.

The provision of talking books and magazines eventually started in 1956 for the first books and in 1958 for the first sound carried newspaper, (which is still edited twice a week with three hours of reading from the daily press). Up till this

year everything was done on open reels, but since the beginning of 1979 we have started the conversion to compact cassettes, and at the moment we have about 600 titles in from 4 till 40 copies. Before we stopped copying on open reels, except in the case of sequels which have already begun on open reels we reached 3700 titles.

During that period from 1956 up till now the thing happened which is almost bound to happen everywhere: The production and reading of Braille literature first decreased, then stabilized at a lower level and finally hopefully is facing a new rise as the new possibilities of computer based production really take effect. The production of Braille music has been stable because of the relatively large number of Danish blind musicians who have about 5000 different items at their disposal.

In the same period the Danish public libraries experienced an enormous development, raising their average level from the more than acceptable to the near superiour. Of course this could not have been done without political support.

In the same period our institution could only just about keep abreast with the rapidly increasing number of borrowers (now more than 7000 compared to just under 10.000 potential blind readers). The main reason for our budget shortcomings in the period was the coincident great expansion of both schools for the blind, the above mentioned State Institute for the Blind and The Institute for Blind and Partially sighted children at Refsnæs, Kalundborg, - because the resources with which to comply with the needs of both the two schools and the library and printing house all come from the same part of the treasury.

And the public libraries did not start their own production and lending of talking books until 1976. Before that time they only had a limited number of talking books available to blind and physically handicapped in-patients through deposits from the State Library for the Blind.

All these things together are the crux of the matter and the explanation of the moderate giving of marks we deserve. Just now we are in a phase where so many new things have just started and the future development has to be planned.

The existing state of things.

But before outlining our hopefully more brilliant future I shall give you a brief account of the present situation.

When a blind, partially sighted or in other ways physically handicapped person needs a library, how does he go about it, and which services are at his disposal?

The typical case in our country is an elderly person who wholly or partially has lost his eyesight, or who has suffered a physical disability which has damaged his reading capacity so seriously that it is no more of practical use, even if his eyesight might not be damaged as such.

If he owns a cassette-recorder in most cases he can apply directly to his regional library where he at present may choose from a few hundred titles. Normally he will not be asked for doctor's certificates or other documents before he can start as a borrower, - provided of course that his application seems reasonable.

In some libraries he may even borrow a tape-recorder. Normally each copy of the cassette-talking-books will be provided with a label stating that this copy is produced with reference to the copyright-act section 18/subsection 2, and accordingly may be lent to blind, partially sighted and other handicapped only. These talking books are produced by the public central of library materials. However a number of commercial publishers have started their own editions of talking books where there are no lending limitations at all, on the publishers part. Then it depends on the library's decision if these commercially produced books should be reserved for those who really need them, i.e. the handicapped.

If the person concerned wants to borrow in the State Library and Printing House for the Blind there are more strict rules. If he is a member of the Danish Society of the Blind, whose criteria of admission are rather rigid, he is immediately entitled to borrow.

This is also the case if he has the statement of a consultant for the blind that he is entitled to membership. These (10) consultants for the blind are appointed by the society of the blind, but paid in part by the government. If he does not fulfil

these conditions he must show a certificate from an eyespecialist that he is not able to read ordinary print, even with use of the best optical facilities.

If one is handicapped in reading for other physical reasons it is up to the library's judgment if one may become a borrower. Even if we do not insist on a doctor's certificate applications are mostly accompanied by one, or by another statement issued by a public officer, relevant in this connexion.

Finally every in-patient who - because of his illness - is incapable of reading ordinary books has a right to borrow talking books. However the most usual start for a future borrower is to make contact with his local public assistance office and apply for the use of a tape-recorder. The consultants for the blind take part in this evaluation when it concerns eye diseases. The tape-recorder is assigned on a basis of permanent loan.

In Denmark there is only one private talking book library, the Christian talking book library at Fredericia, which contains only books on Christian subjects, especially popular Christian fiction. Its conditions to become a borrower are moderate.

But so far the State Library remains the basic public library for the blind and physically handicapped, and it is our obvious duty also to make the more advanced literature available even if the majority of readers stick to the more popular part of the stock.

The greatest need of more special and advanced literature exists of course within the educational and professional field.

Originally, i.e. up till about 1970, the State Library and Printing House for the Blind produced all literature for all categories of borrowers, including pupils and all kind of students and professionals. Then a diversion of labour was made, which involved that the Refnæs School produces books for blind children at the primary and secondary levels, while the State Institute in Copenhagen takes care of the supply to the upper forms, the senior schools and all kinds of advanced studies, and finally the State Library covers the professional needs of literature.

In agreement with this new system the holdings of textbooks in the State Library were allocated to the two institutes, regrettably accompanied by that part of the budget which had been used for this purpose. This reduced the desirable growth in the stock of

books, urgently needed by the rapidly growing number of ordinary readers substantially, and caused a strong retardation in the planned development of our own new special library for professionals. And that is why it contains only a few hundred titles in Braille and on tape respectively.

The collections in the students library at the State Institute in Copenhagen total more than 2000 items on tape and more than 3000 in Braille, from small departmental circulars to large textbooks

Of course the needs of students and professionals overlap, so we have a very close mutual information service and lend to each others borrowers on request.

A promising new initiative in this field has been taken by a few public libraries which now serve their handicapped readers through reading on tape of articles from periodicals, extracts from textbooks, reference books etc., and no doubt more libraries will follow this good example.

As for periodicals the State Library produces 22 on tape, most of them are on open reels, but an increasing number appears on compact cassettes and a few on both. For the most part they are of vocational, hobby or recreational nature. The newest "periodical" is in fact a whole book, namely one of current interest or immediate importance, edited 6 times a year, - every subscriber receives his own copy. The oldest is a journal, edited twice a week since 1958. It contains copies from the daily press and feature articles.

An interesting innovation in this sphere is local journals edited weekly or biweekly by a number of public libraries. Their contents are basically local information, such as: What happens in the near future in the community, meetings, lectures, performances, entertainments, - when and where? Is any roadwork in progress which one has to beware of and so forth.

Gradually these local journals will probably replace existing journals, produced on voluntary basis with a broader and more individual choice of subjects, but also with a more variable quality, technically and as regards contents.

As you know a number of our borrowers cannot visit the library in-person because of their handicap. Some of them are institutiona-

lized in hospitals, nursing houses or whatever it might be. The answer to their library need is outreach library work, either to the single borrower or through public library units situated in the institutions. It may be a combination of correspondence -, telephone - and delivery service, or - best of all - direct call by a librarian.

The first library unit in a hospital was founded in 1926, and since then a large number of patients libraries have been established, to a great extent served by professional librarians. Also individual shut-in-service has been organized by an increasing number of libraries. Since the beginning of the 1960^{es} talking book deposits have been sent to a number of hospital libraries, and this will probably increase in the age of compact-cassettes.

The ordinary Braille reader is, as you know very often a patient person, maybe too patient. To some degree he has become resigned, because he can also borrow talking books while only a small minority of talking book readers master Braille. For his benefit exist 9 periodicals in Braille of which the weekly radio and TV-program is by far the most important and the most popular.

Due to the Danish copyright-legislation he has a single advantage compared with the talking book reader. He can purchase books.

The disadvantage is how much room they take. A relatively small one-volume Danish-English dictionary takes up 26 Braille volumes.

Another important magazine is the weekly for the deaf-blind, a review of current events in the political and other fields of general interest. Besides that a very small magazine (only one sheet) is edited 4 times a week with an ultra-short description of the very latest news. These magazines are with first grade Danish Braille, i.e. with a very small degree of abbreviation, and all kinds of complicated words or sentence structures are avoided. At the moment less than 100 book titles are edited annually. But we hope that the computer facilities which have been placed at our disposal by the society of the blind will enable us to increase this production, perhaps with some technical innovations aiming at a cheaper price per copy.

The present system starts in a punched-card bureau, continues in a larger computer firm where our Braille program is fed into an IBM 370/158 computer which produces^a magnetic tape, which holds the symbols of abbreviated Braille, and through a minicomputer passes into the printer which alternately produces two printed

and two blank pages on endless paper.

The problem of other automatic small scale production methods or computer operated stereographing has not yet been considered. But of course we are very keen on composers tapes and also on the Norwegian system where all pages are filled with Braille. 57% of our readers have passed 70. That's why we did not start with the children who hopefully in our field of activity will get a chance to experience the full practical utilization of the many technical advances which are in progress at the moment.

In Denmark a blind, partially sighted or in other ways physically handicapped child may either go to school in his local primary or secondary school together with non-handicapped pupils, to a special centre school for children with different handicaps or to +)
During their schooldays some handicapped children may attend all 3 types of schools. Almost all blind or seriously weak-sighted stays at the Refsnæs school once or a few times to receive intensive training in those practical skills which a blind person has to manage to be as independent as possible.

The Refsnæs school is responsible for the provision of school books in Braille or on tape for blind and visually handicapped children, irrespective of the type of school. In addition to that it produces and lends childrens books in Braille and on tape. So does the State Library and Printing House for the Blind, but the produced number of titles is very small. And even if the public libraries aim at a percentage of childrens books as large as 1/3 of the total stock of talking books the effect of this praiseworthy endeavour will not be distinctive before the total number of titles is larger than at present.

Each school will provide the necessary technical equipment such as tape recorders, Perkins brailers, ordinary typewriters and to some extent also the needed optical facilities in cooperation with the appropriate authorities. According to provisions in the public assistance act such aids are paid by the public funds.

From the information given above it follows that the average standard of library service for the blind and physically handicapped leaves much to be desired. And the standard of information about the actual service is not satisfactory either, even if catalogues and book lists are edited at relatively regular

+) a special school for children with one specific handicap.

intervals. A real co-operation between the units has not yet been established. As far as public relation concerns the society of the blind has made good contribution to draw attention to the problems, most recent through its new corps of informants.

The future.

But when we nevertheless have confidence in the future it's due partly to the approaching new library legislation and partly to the report "The handicapped in reading and the libraries", edited 1979 by the State Inspectorate of Public Libraries and the Department of Primary Schools, general Education and Colleges of Education.

The Library commission recommends that the State Library and Printing House for the Blind should not belong under the Directorate of Social Services as a part of the public assistance, but ought to be transferred to the Ministry of Cultural affairs as a part of the public library service. The talking book program in the public libraries was originally suggested in a report from 1973 about production and distribution of talking books, prepared by a committee appointed by the State Director of public libraries.

The background for the appointment was of course the unsatisfactory service offered by the State Library and Printing House, combined with the acknowledgement of the public libraries' natural obligations towards the handicapped public, obligations which had so far been met only to a relatively small extent. The reasoning is unimpeachable and has also been adopted by a group of blind students and professionals and probably by the greater part of the world of the blind. So it is to be expected that the new public library bill will involve provision of library service to the blind and other handicapped people.

Of course it is an obvious thought to organize the library service to the blind and handicapped according to the same model as the public library service as a whole, i.e. the maximum

utilization of the total stock of (talking) books in the whole country, only limited by practical considerations. A number of central (county) libraries already have provided a talking book service within their region in accordance with that pattern. Now we are anxious to learn if the coming draftbill makes it an obligation for public libraries to have talking books, and if so at what levels, in all full-time public libraries or only in the central libraries.

Only in 1976 the public libraries got their first talking books on compact cassettes, at the beginning reproductions of the most popular evergreens in the State Library for the blind. The present number of titles is about 400, and in addition to this a number of titles produced by commercial publishers, maybe 500 total. The librarians at the State Library and Printing House for the Blind think that the best way to organize the desirable nationwide library service for the blind and other handicapped in reading is decentralization combined with a strong rearrangement of the national central library and production plant (that is the State Library and Printing House for the Blind).

Each municipal library-system should according to its size, economy and status have smaller or larger collections of talking books. Dependent on the extension of talking book-obligation in the expected new library legislation, a number of libraries might not provide talking books by themselves, but then it should of course be their duty to order the desired items from other units in the system. It may be a neighbouring library, the central library or the national library for the blind.

The latter should provide book deposits as well as single books either through a library or directly to the borrower, according to a system adopted by all parties concerned.

Seen from the borrowers angle it would look like this: I may use my local library and/or the national library.

The possibility of borrowing locally as well as centrally should serve a dual or threefold purpose: The possibility of close contact to one's local library, a guarantee of enough supply of books and finally the possibility of making one's own choice of main-supplier of library service, - cf. the interavailability system for non-handicapped borrowers, which could never be put into practice in the same way for handicapped readers, just because of their handicap.

All things considered such a system combines the best service to the borrowers with a maximum utilization of the invested taxation-money.

Furthermore the proposed system is practicable, irrespective of the future ministerial affiliation of the State Library and Printing House for the Blind.

While we are waiting for the new public library act it is a good idea to study the report about "The handicapped in reading and the libraries", a useful tool for everybody working within our sphere of activity. The committee had the following mandate: "It is the task of the committee to perform a thorough working up of all problems related to the library service (public libraries and school libraries) to handicapped in reading (children, young people and adults) also including the provision of especially adopted materials". It contains a whole catalogue of all kinds of handicaps, what is done at the moment to compensate for the lacking ability to use ordinary library service, and what ought to be done if the compensatory arrangements should be satisfactory, and which legitimate demands should be made on the materials that ought to be placed at the disposal of the handicapped.

This report, which includes an - unfortunately rather short - English summary, deals not only with physical handicaps, but also with social and mental, - which probably in many cases are two sides of the same matter. Where for instance to place the seriously word-blind? Is their handicap physical, mental or social, or may it perhaps have all three aspects? This example warns us against too sharp classifications of the single handicaps, especially if we for capacity-reasons have to reduce the number of persons who may benefit from our service. And we probably are forced to include only those in our service, whose handicaps are fundamental, i. e. could not be compensated for or relieved in any other way, - until we have more sufficient resources.

I think the seriously word-blind is a typical example of those who should be lost, if we do not try to help them. The report describes a system, designed especially for them: the book+tape system. The text, spoken on the tape at a relatively slow speed, should encourage the word-blind person to follow the printed text and at a suitable point of time proceed on his own without support of the spoken word. Even commercial publishers have started a similar

project with easily read childrens books.

Finally the report suggests a new authority, working especially with library service to the handicapped. It should observe the development in progress and take all appropriate initiatives to promote and improve library services for the handicapped.

One of the basic assumptions of the report is that the time has come to reserve a greater part of the joint library budget to the handicapped, also and not least if the total economic resources available to the Danish library system do not grow because of general economic recession.

So after all I think we may be confident that we shall reach the have-something-level in our time.

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